

2nd Year



Eagle Forum Report

successor to *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*

200 W. Third St., Ste. 502 • Alton, IL 62002 • (618) 433-8990 • Eagle@EagleForum.org • EagleForum.org

August 2018

Volume 2/Number 8

Gambling: Getting Nothing From Something

DON'T BET YOUR LIFE

by Rodger Weems, state chairman of Texans Against Gambling, also known as Stop Predatory Gambling. He is a Church of Christ minister.

I didn't need a full second after saying "Hello" to recognize the deep, kind, authoritative voice on the other end of the phone call. "Brother Rodger," he began. I knew the caller from at least three settings: church, civic club, plus he was my banker.

"You know Jerry Allen Goldberg," he began, in a voice unusually awkwardly for this articulate community leader. (Jerry Allen Goldberg is not the real name.) "Jerry was found dead last night near Las Vegas, out in the desert. He had been missing for four days before they found him. His family would like you to officiate at his funeral." Jerry was not a Christian and not active in his own faith, so his family turned to me.

Jerry was a gambler who had stopped gambling years before and not even his banker knew he had ever been an addicted gambler. If his banker could not sniff out an addic-

tion having financial consequences, surely no one else outside of Jerry's family knew either. But there were problems at work and his income had dropped precipitously. To make up for the hole in his budget, and apparently as an outlet for his stress, Jerry had returned to gambling.

In desperation, Jerry crossed a line, one that is all too common for addicted gamblers. The names and details vary, but the story rarely does. Jerry embezzled money from a family trust.

Jerry decided on one last trip to Vegas with the remaining trust money. Either he would win back enough money to replace what he had stolen from his family, or he would rent a car, drive out to the desert, and take his own life. The outcome was agonizing but sadly predictable. The first rule of gambling is: **Over the long run, the house always wins.** There are no exceptions, and there were none for Jerry.

In the 40 years since Jerry's suicide, the sad details of that week are still burned in my memory. There were the sobs of his widow as we planned Jerry's service. Jerry's brother reacted to the theft with, "We would have forgiven him. We had done so before. I wish he had known that."

Perhaps most telling, the hundred members of our civic club

attended Jerry's funeral, a tribute to how well liked he was. The sad irony is that, had anyone known about Jerry's gambling addiction, someone would have stepped up and helped him. The bitter truth is that we will never know.

That encounter with a gambling addict came early in my ministry. After other exposures to gambling addiction, I became active in the anti-gambling movement. But I still grieve for Jerry.

Since then, mental health professionals have changed their understanding and treatment of gambling addiction. Can addiction to an activity, such as gambling or sex, be even possible or are only substances, such as alcohol, drugs, or tobacco, capable of producing physical dependence and could be categorized as addiction?

We now know that activities can produce psychological addiction, which can be as difficult to overcome as physical addiction. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition*, commonly known as the *DSM-5* and published in 2013 by the American Psychiatric Association, now recognizes "Gambling Disorder" as an identifiable category of addiction.

Under "Non-Substance-Related Disorders: Gambling Disorder", *DSM-5* lists these criteria using Diagnostic Codes 312.31 and F63.0:

A. Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or

(Continued on page 2)



distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four (or more) of the following in a 12-month period:

1. Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
2. Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
3. Has made repeated unsuccessful attempts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
4. Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).
5. Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., helpless, guilty, anxious, depressed).

6. After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even “chasing” one’s losses.

7. Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.

8. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.

9. Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling.

B. The gambling behavior is not better explained by a manic episode.

Since gambling addiction is now a recognized disorder with its own diagnosis codes, treatment can be covered by health insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid. The twelve-step programs, such as Gamblers’ Anon-

ymous, are no longer considered adequate treatment but those programs are important to maintain abstinence from addictive behaviors.

The National Institutes for Health now regard addictions, including gambling, as the consequence of a brain injury, either physical, psychological, or emotional. The trauma may have occurred in the womb, in infancy or childhood, or in adulthood. In an often-desperate attempt to restore some sense of emotional equilibrium, the trauma victim may succumb to an addictive behavior.

Addiction treatment is far more likely to be effective when viewed as a brain disorder rather than a moral failing — although moral failure often accompanies addiction. 

MISLAYING OUR MORAL COMPASS

by Mark Andrews, Eagle Forum anti-Gambling Chairman. Mark has spent decades as a volunteer lobbyist in Missouri and Florida against the expansion of state-sponsored gambling. His wife, Pat, is President of Florida Eagle Forum.

The devastating results of legalized gambling in the U.S. are huge: families torn apart, massive amounts of personal debt, large numbers of children gambling, and even suicides. How can we repair the damage to society or at least slow down gambling expansion?

Ask your pastor, rabbi, or priest if gambling is morally wrong and you will likely get similar answers. Most clergy agree that a decision to gamble your money is very unwise and could result in devastating consequences.

A much deeper **moral problem** exists with gambling in America. The greatest amount of gambling and the most harmful results come from state-sponsored gambling. Your state is likely a big promoter of gambling because your elected officials have voted to make it so. The legislators fall prey to the money being handed them by casino interests or to the myth that gambling revenues will help our schools.

Gambling is sold as a harmless money maker, but people must lose

money for gambling to produce money. A pro-gambling vote by a legislator is a vote to make a loser out of his/her constituent. It is morally wrong to vote to encourage people to lose.

In Missouri, the casinos agreed to a 20 percent sharing of profits, payable to the state annually. So the state gives a license to the casino to operate and in return it gets its cut. Missouri happily got over \$100 million in the first year. Legislators who voted for this plan were elated that the budget received such an influx of cash.

But look at the real cost. At 20 percent, gamblers had to lose 5 times that much. So gamblers lost \$500 million and the state got \$100 million. Every year since then, there has been pressure in the legislature to increase the money. The legislature wants you to gamble more because that gives the state more funding. State governments have ad-

opted a money making scheme whose success is directly proportional to the harm it causes its people.

Politicians have all manner of excuses for voting in favor of gambling, but it is **immoral** to vote for something that causes harm. As Abraham Lincoln said, “What is morally wrong cannot be politically right”. The stakes are higher now with the onset of sports gambling and its harmful connection to children.

How can we change? First, call a spade a spade: any vote for state sponsored gambling is a huge **moral problem**.

Second, we can win this battle by influencing the votes. Legislators need to hear from us that they are acting **immorally** if they vote in favor of a bill that knowingly will harm families and society. Minds can be changed if our approach is in a respectful manner.

Third, only a few people make these decisions. Join with other groups to make your voice heard more effectively and contact each and every state legislator. The blame for what is about to happen lays right at their feet. 

